Garib Rath

2724. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Garib Rath trains existing in the country since its implementation and the States being covered; and

(b) what is the public response, so far, to Garib Rath train scheme?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) Presently 4 pairs of "Garib Rath" express trains are running in the country. These trains are serving the states of Delhi, Gujarat, Maharastra, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu, Haryana and Punjab.

(b) Response has been very good.

Rail link with neighbouring countries

2725. PROF. ALKA BALRAM KSHATRIYA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether in a significant move to strengthen bilateral relations between Bangladesh and India, Indian Railways, after a gap of four decades, is getting ready to revive its rail links with the neighbouring countries;

(b) if so, whether the agreement between Bangladesh and India for running the train needs to be renewed and an agreement in this regard is likely to be signed;

(c) whether the Railways have already got the clearance from the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Customs Department in this regard; and

(d) if so, by when the train services between the two countries are likely to be started?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) to (d) There are already rail links between India and Bangladesh through the following five routes:

Gede (India)-Darsana (Bangladesh)	- Broad Gauge
Singhabad (India)-Rohanpur (Bangladesh)	- Broad Gauge
Petrapole (India)-Benapole (Bangladesh)	- Broad Gauge
Radhikapur (India)-Birol (Bangladesh)	- Broad Gauge on Indian side and Metre Gauge on Bangladesh side.
Mahisasan (India)-Shahbazpur (Bangladesh)	- Metre Gauge.

Presently only goods train services are running between India and Bangladesh through Gede-Darsana, Singhabad-Rohanpur and Petrapole-Benapole BG routes. Operation of Radhikapur-Birol route has remained suspended since 01.04.2005 due to Broadgauging on Indian side while the track on Birol-Parbatipur section in Bangladesh Railway is still in Metre Gauge. The Mahisasan-Shahbazpur MG route has not been operational since December, 1996 due to lack of traffic.